

Baltimore which appears as early as 1670 on Augustine Herman's Map.<sup>8</sup> We know for a curious reason that the courthouse stood on land of William Osborne which was on Bush River and probably at this location. For some reason Osborne had neglected to convey the land properly to the commissioners of the county when the courthouse was built. He was summoned by the court to remedy the omission in 1683,<sup>9</sup> and he did appear the following September 4 and in open court acknowledged the transfer.<sup>10</sup>

In any case, in 1676, it was ordered by the Council that an ordinary be kept at the courthouse in Baltimore County which would indicate that it was finished or nearly so by that time.<sup>11</sup>

We do not know who built the courthouse, of what it was made, or how much it cost. We do know, however that in 1683, the June Court ordered Sheriff Miles Gibson "to Imploy Carpenters for repairing the Courthouse & likewise to take care for the Sitting up the pillory and stocks."<sup>12</sup> Two years later at the November Court, 1685, the levy included 1,500 pounds of tobacco "for the carpenter for pulling down the dormant windows of the Court house and coursing the same well with good boards and sap drawne out and for nailes."<sup>13</sup> Perhaps there is enough evidence here to indicate that the building was now in sufficient disrepair to justify its abandonment. There were also many who found its location inconvenient. By 1686, such complaints as these might have been translated into a petition to the Council to move the courthouse to a point on the south side of Winter's Run "neere the path that goes from the Potomac to the Susquehannoh Rivers." The Council deferred action on this petition until the sheriff and other leading citizens of Baltimore County who were then in St. Mary's could be consulted. Nothing further is heard of this demarche.<sup>14</sup> But a move seemed inevitable.

The records of the court provide an almost perfect account of the last years of this courthouse on Bush River. Ritchie found a suit in which Thomas Heath, innkeeper, asked that the estate of Thomas Long, late sheriff, be required to pay him the sums levied in 1687, 1688 and 1689 for the entertainment of the justices.<sup>15</sup> In the proceedings of the August Court of 1693, a certain Richard (?) was indicted for perjury committed in 1691 before Their Majesties' Justices "at the Court house in Gunpowder Hundred," indicating that the new location, if not the new courthouse, was already in use at that time.<sup>16</sup> In 1693, Thomas Long was indicted for threatening to burn this old courthouse.<sup>17</sup> In the June session of court of 1695, the justices asked for bids on "the late Court house and land adjoining at Bush River." Whereupon it was sold to John Ferry for four thousand pounds of tobacco.<sup>18</sup>

## Courthouse on the Gunpowder River

There has been preserved an almost day-by-day account of the construction of the courthouse which apparently was begun soon after the move to the Gunpowder. It is interesting enough to be repeated here in some detail because it is so typical of the difficulties of the justices in getting things done and their travail in meeting in temporary homes and in composing the hostile interests of their constituents.

Ritchie has found that Michael Judd was the contractor in 1692, and in that year he subcontracted with Mathias Jewell to get the courthouse frame up by the next March Court

<sup>8</sup> The proof is complicated and is perhaps not conclusive; the reader will find it in the articles cited above.

<sup>9</sup> Baltimore County Court Records, Liber D, f. 41, Ms.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 49. In the proceedings of the Baltimore County Court for March Term 1772, we find this curious petition: "James Phillips petitioner for Commission on part of a Tract of Land called Covent Garden whereon the Court House of this County Originally Stood." (*Liber 1772, 1775-1781*, f. 6.) The writer finds no ready explanation for this statement.

<sup>11</sup> *Arch. of Md.* XV, p. 78.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370.

<sup>14</sup> *Arch. of Md.*, V, 473, 474.

<sup>15</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>16</sup> Ritchie, *op. cit.*, p. 105, and Baltimore County Court Records, F. No. 1, f. 497.

<sup>17</sup> For this reference and much about the second courthouse I am indebted to the Reverend George B. Scriven for the use of his manuscript article, "Baltimore County's Second Courthouse."

<sup>18</sup> Ritchie, p. 9.